

GNC

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1
NOVEMBER 2016

CONNECT

FOR MEMBERS OF THE GANDHINAGAR CLUB ONLY

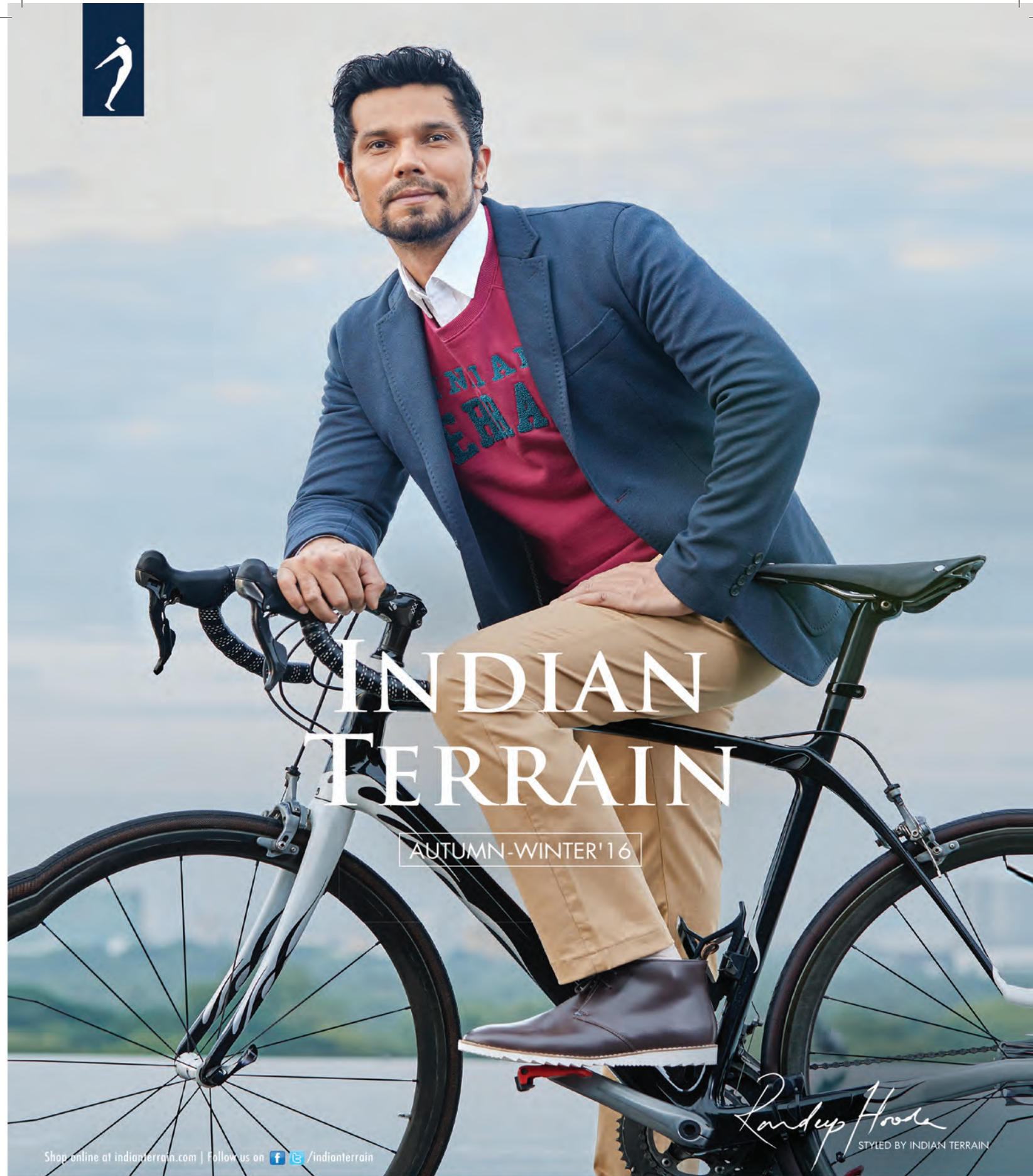


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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

At the outset, I would like to thank you electing me as President of this prestigious and vibrant club that has been a second home to me from time immemorial. I strongly believe in one guiding philosophy – the unshakeable policy of inclusiveness. I propose to carry forward this principle to ensure that every member feels like a part of this wonderful institution. I assure you that your opinion and feedback will always form the basis of all policies going forward. I look forward to hearing from you via mail on sunil_reddy7@hotmail.com.

We, the committee of 2016 – 2018, assure you that together we will bring to you the best every facility has to offer. Our tenure started off with a bang, quite literally, with the Diwali Night that saw a record turnout. This would not have been possible without the wholehearted effort and involvement of every member of the committee and more importantly without your participation. I hope this is just a prelude to more exciting days.

Let us make our club a home where you and your family spend joyous moments and take back even more precious memories, day after day.

I also take this opportunity to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Warm Regards,
Sunil Reddy (S 110)



M.SUNIL REDDY
PRESIDENT

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FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

At the outset, I record my sincere thanks to all members of my club for having elected me as Vice President for the year 2016-18.

I assure you all that I will do my best in the interest of my members to enhance further the image of this Club.

The first steps we have initiated is in respect to the Library and the Magazine. A lot of senior members had expressed a desire to have the lift reach the basement for better usage of the Library. The committee will work on the sanction already available for the lift and try to address this request at the earliest.

A team consisting of Mr Vinay Kamath, Editor of GNC Connect, and the team at PixelPro, which has designed this magazine, will support me on the content and layout and I am sure of delivering a sumptuous bi-monthly GNC Connect which will be sought after in the months to come.

We welcome contribution of articles along with photos from members to make the GNC Connect colourful and with a purpose.

Best wishes and enjoy the GNC camaraderie.
Mohan Raghavan (M 161)



MOHAN RAGHAVAN
VICE PRESIDENT

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FROM THE SECRETARY

Greetings to all Fellow Members,

At the outset, along with my fellow committee members, I would like to thank all the members of GNC for having voted for us and placing your trust in our abilities to manage the club affairs for the next two years. We hope to rise up to your expectations and build the club to an even more fun place for families to be in.

Our thanks to the previous committee for having done a stellar job in renovating the club premises and giving the club a classy and modern look. All the hardware is ready and we hope to fine-tune the software in the coming days.

The GNC Club Day was again a well-attended affair and also gave an opportunity for the club to honour dedicated and long-serving staff of the club. As you all know the evening was filled with music and entertainment which was enjoyed by all.

The new committee promised an explosive Diwali Dhamaka Night and that's what we had. With Bharathi Entertainers singing memorable songs with a rocking band, an explosive fire crackers show, and free Mehandi and Bangle stalls, it was a memorable night. Diwali night saw over 1,000 members troop in, an all-time record for a GNC night, while close to 700 members enjoyed the dinner that night. All in all, it was a rocking evening and we thank all the members who made this possible.

Our congratulations to GNC cricket team for having won the MyInd Trophy and Prince of Arcot Trophy. They have been consistently winning trophies and our kudos to the team.

In the coming days the new committee wants to make the club a fun place with more events and activities for families. In this first issue of GNC Connect, brought out by this committee, we have introduced a new and stimulating quiz for kids to tackle. We invite members to participate in GNC Connect as it's your magazine and captures all the activities of the club. Wishing all my fellow members a Merry Christmas & a prosperous New Year.

Warm Regards
Mahesh Shanbhag (M216)



MAHESH V SHANBHAG
SECRETARY

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FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings to all fellow members,

I thank the new committee, especially the Secretary, Mahesh Shanbhag, and Vice-President Mohan Raghavan, for having reposed faith in me to be the Editor of GNC Connect. I hope to live up to their, and the members', expectations in bringing out a high quality magazine that reflects the vibrancy and ethos of a renovated GNC.

November has been a momentous month. Donald Trump won the US Presidency, despite all the opposition. Demonetisation stunned us and, what's going to pinch us all, the rains failed last month. After last year's deluge, we are witnessing the other extreme and it's been a 'dry' November – though definitely not on GNC's Hawaiian bar night, captured in these pages! How the fallout of demonetisation and the absence of rains will all play out in the coming months remains to be seen.

We have an interesting complement of articles this month, which captures the varied tastes, interests and diversity of club members – ranging from travel to exotic locales and terrace gardening, to reminiscences and traffic management in chaotic Chennai. That apart, we have introduced Mind Quest, a quiz for teens to tackle.

My request is for members to keep the articles coming and write about your interests, hobbies and travel. We also want to capture the achievements of GNC members and their children and request you to write in with photos on significant achievements. Do honour and celebrate their achievements by sharing them with the club members; we would welcome it. I also thank member Parimala Rao (J 133) for helping me in the editing and proof-reading of the magazine.

Mail in your articles and contributions to the club mail ID or mail direct to gnconnect2016@gmail.com. Look forward to hearing from you.
Happy Connecting!

With Regards
Vinay Kamath (V322)



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As original as you



As the time comes to go abroad to study, Thanvi Srikant (S563) is awash in nostalgia for our city

"In 500 words, please describe how you would contribute to the cultural diversity of this graduate school."

I stared at the screen, speechless. Applying for an M.S. abroad was a long and tedious process, something I had been mentally prepared for. Yet, when I saw these words displayed on the screen, I was at a loss for words.

A thousand memories flash past me. My first attempt at bursting a 1,000-wala during Deepavali. The Navaratri visits to my friends' homes where I sang quickly in anticipation of the tasty sundal. The many times I've assisted my mother and grandmother in the kitchen to make laddoos. Kutcheri-hopping during December season. Shaking my head in awe a million times when T.M.Krishna rendered his Kalyani. Cheering loudly at my best friend's arangetram. Celebrating a wedding and dancing to a Shahrukh Khan hit during the 'Mehendi' session. Tasting a friend's mouth-watering biryani during Eid. The routine school excursion to the Arjuna caves in Mahabalipuram. Spending a day with my family during the Christmas weekend. Making our own 'eco-friendly' Ganesha for Vinayaka Chaturthi.

Would these alone qualify as 'cultural' experiences? What about watching a first-day, first-show at Sathyam cinemas, or celebrating 'Kaanum Pongal' at the beach? Be it listening to an Indian Rock fusion concert at Music Academy, watching a play at the Museum Theatre, or having 'jigarthanda' at Murugan Idly Shop in Besant Nagar, the list is endless.

LAND OF A THOUSAND MEMORIES

Thanvi Srikant

Yet this is merely a glimpse of Chennai's 'cultural diversity'. When you think of the country celebrating festivals of all religions throughout the year, a big realisation dawns upon you. Living in a cultural hotspot is definitely not overrated. The abundance of colour, enthusiasm and positive energy is the sole reason we feel 'alive'.

How was I supposed to explain all this in a mere 500 words?

Sometimes, you begin to truly appreciate your environment only when the time comes to part with it. I didn't realise just how much of a privilege it has been to be so culturally connected. I take great pride in being a resident of Madras - a city whose infrastructure is growing by the minute, but one that will always remember its traditions.

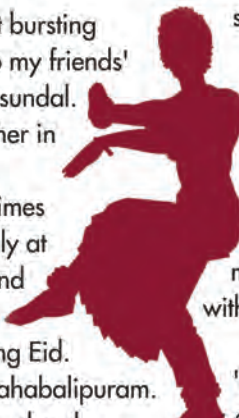
As I slowly come to terms with the fact that I may not be in Chennai next year, I feel a void within me. Leaving this city and probably this country, is going to be much harder than I thought. Of course, I will be nurturing these age-old traditions wherever I go, but it's not the same unless you're at home.

The reason I'm rambling so much is primarily because I would like to see people appreciate their lives just a little more. The next time you find someone saying, "It's getting too noisy, dirty and populated here. America madiri varuma?", bring them down to Earth (or India, rather!). Help them realize that no matter how clean and beautiful a place is, you can't find happiness without the people you love.

'Peace', after all, is a relative term. Even a memory as insignificant embarrassing yourself on Dandiya Night to the tunes of deafening Bollywood music, could be your moment of 'peace'.

Thinking about my essay, I know that 500 words will not be sufficient to express even a fraction of what I would like to say. Nevertheless, I'm thankful to have my eyes opened to the culturally rich environment I call my home.

Take a second off from your busy schedule to look around at the bustling city you live in. What do you see?



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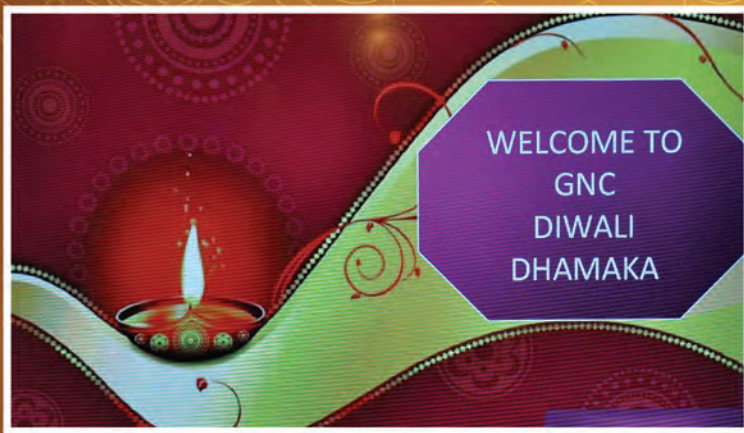


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EVENTS

DIWALI DHAMAKA

Gandhi Nagar Club celebrated
Diwali with great gusto
on October 22nd





CONNECTING WITH OLD FRIENDS

RV RAJAN



Meeting old friends from his school and college sets off RV Rajan (R 143) on a journey down memory lane

It is always an immensely enjoyable experience when you meet your classmates from school or college. The bond you share is something unique. It does not matter what positions your friends have reached in life or how high and mighty they have become; the conversations always veer around to discussing their deeds and misdeeds in school or college. The nicknames given to friends and teachers will be recalled — for the students, nicknames such as Jadia, Mota and Kania were most common. A teacher who came to class always wearing a neck-tie was called Mr Tie. The teachers' idiosyncrasies or unusual habits would be discussed threadbare, leading to a lot of harmless fun and boisterous laughter.

A couple of years ago, a small group of my schoolmates, the 1958 batch of students of the S.I.W.S. High School, at Wadala, in Mumbai, all above 70, met after 53 years at our old school premises in Mumbai.

As friends started arriving I could not recognise half of them, especially those who had turned completely bald. None of the ladies among the group could I recognise. However, a few among the men with abundant grey hair did retain some resemblance to their old selves. While some looked healthy, others displayed the ravages that time had inflicted on them due to health-related issues.

One friend, an active sportsman in his school-days, had maintained a good physique even at 73. He looked fit and energetic. When recounting his life story, he proudly declared that he has two sons and three grand-children but was still trying for a girl child from his only wife of 40 years!

Another friend, who has taken to writing poetry in Tamil post-retirement, read out a poem he had written specially for the

occasion. Since then he has been filling up the Inbox of the group with poems written on every conceivable topic on earth — with the blessings of Kanchi Paramacharya, as he claims in every poem.

A friend, known for his meticulousness even in his schooldays, had located an old diary in which he had got farewell comments from friends and teachers, complete with their nicknames. The words brought alive those personalities and made for many nostalgic moments!

When one friend started recalling the true and imaginary one-sided love affairs of the classmates during our school-days, one could see the spouses of those whose names were mentioned perking up and listening carefully! On the whole, the group had a whale of a time and, at the end of the day, decided to meet regularly. A few of us have become so close after five decades, that it is difficult to believe we were not even in touch with one another all these years.

Thanks to social media like Facebook, it is now easy to connect with long-lost friends. And WhatsApp allows one to communicate with such friends on a minute-to-minute basis. The world really has shrunk!



Images Source: Internet

GNC Cricket teams wins **MYIND TROPHY 2016**

The GNC cricket team, led by Murukesh Mani, won the MyInd Trophy for inter-clubs by beating Gymkhana Club in sterling fashion. The tournament was hosted by Indira Nagar Club. In the finals, GNC scored 91 in six overs (an eight-a-side team plays), while Gym scored 54. Eight top city clubs participate in this tourney. The matches were played at the Amir Mahal ground.

Abhinav Mathew, the man of the match, starred in the finals by scoring 25 in 10 balls and taking two wickets. In the quarter finals, GNC beat Presidency, scoring 110 to Presidency's 55 runs. In the semi finals, GNC beat Cosmopolitan Club, scoring 71 runs to Cosmos' 70, beating them by one run in an exciting match. Nishant won the man of the match in the semis scoring 20 runs and taking two close catches. Chirrag Sheth, who was the man of the match in the first match, scored 120 runs in the three matches.

Captain Murukesh received the Trophy from Mr Mohan Sai, Secretary of the Indira Nagar Club. Kudos to the young cricket team of GNC.



VOLCANIC MORNINGS, TRANQUIL WATERFALLS

MURUGAN MOHAN

Murugan (M'293) has an enthralling experience in East Java, Indonesia, trekking up scenic volcano craters



Say hello to East Java, Indonesia; a charming country dotted with beautiful landscapes, warm and smiling people, ancient temples, flavoursome food and good coffee.



Surabaya, North Java, is a two hour flight from Singapore. A 6 hour road trip from the Juanda International airport lands me at the eastern most tip of Java, a small village called Banyuwangi. Nightfall welcomes me in this small village, my base camp for an early morning trek that will lead to Mount Ijen, a volcanic crater. Tony, my guide, tells me that sunrise over the crater is fantastic and requests me to set my alarm at 2 a.m.! I gasp, but do as I am told. 2:15 a.m. we set forth on a gruelling 3 km trek to the top of the extra-steep mountains. With my camera, lenses and tripod, I crawl, huffing and puffing and at times wanting to roll back downhill. But a hot coffee convinces me otherwise.

The sun rises in all its glory as I reach the peak and I watch the sight all around me unfold with bated breath. It is nothing short of spectacular. A hot spring with huge sulphur deposits from a deep crater covered by mountains on three sides and the sea on one side and a turquoise lake at the centre make it picture-perfect for a photographer. That moment I decide the next stop will be Mt. Bromo at the Sumeru National Reserve.

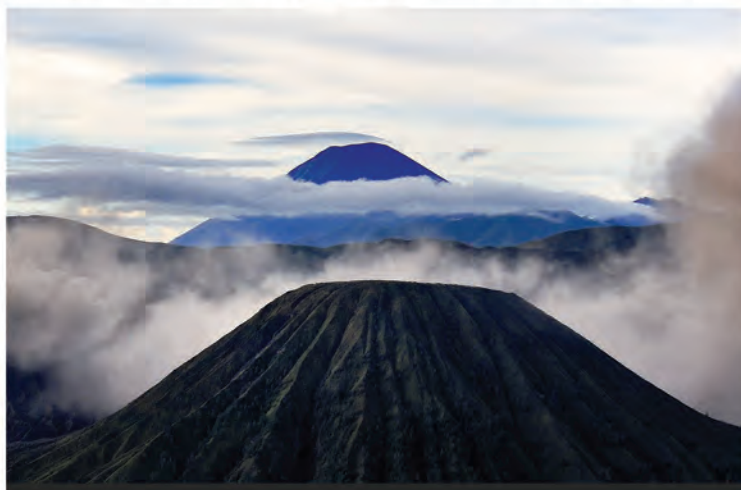


The next freezing morning starts with an even steeper climb to an adjoining mountain range from where Mt. Bromo's scape stupefies. The volcanic crater spitting out huge clouds of fumes amidst green mountains is a page straight out of the NatGeo channel. It was overwhelming to say the least. Unfortunately, on this day the high activity level in the crater makes the fumes poisonous and dangerous and visits to the mouth of the crater becomes a no-no.

We drive again for three hours and Malang invites me with its cloud-covered mountains filled with lush apple farms. I handpick some delicious apples, watch some birds (being an avid bird watcher) and decide to snooze a while. But, Tony wants to carry on; too many places to visit and too little time.



Coban Rondo, a scenic 60 metre waterfall at Batu, 32 km west of Malang is the next stop. The rejuvenating fragrance in the air, the taste of the water, the quietness and beautiful panorama transport me to a meditative realm. I soak myself in the emotion as much as I can.



Back to Surabaya and waiting at the airport to fly back to Singapore, there's only one thing on my mind: *when am I coming here again?*



BOOT CAMP @ GNC

Every weekend, health conscious GNC members gather on the club lawn to participate in a boot camp, a session of low intensity exercises. Conducted

free for members by gym coach Ravishankar, the low intensity exercises has seen high interest levels among the members.



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PHOTO MONTAGE

Oktoberfest at the Sports Lounge

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Carnatic Music Nite

October 2, 2016



Kolu display at the Club

October 2016



OUT OF AFRICA

RAVI AYYANGAR



It's often called the Dark Continent, but Ravi Ayyangar (P 193), who lived in Zimbabwe a few years, experienced Africa at its best.

Africa, for many is a continent of wildlife and epidemics. While this may be true, the continent has a charm of its own which is unique. An African experience is something all of us would cherish. Having lived in Zimbabwe for a while, my family and I were fortunate to experience Africa at its best.

Once known as the rice bowl of Southern Africa, Zimbabwe (or Southern Rhodesia as it was known prior to its independence in 1980) was ravaged by hyperinflation in the mid-2000s and has not yet recovered. It holds a record for having printed the highest currency note - 100 trillion dollars (which probably got you a loaf of bread!!). Accounting was such a nightmare that one had to actually measure the number of zeroes in a transaction with a tape! The government tried all methods including redenomination of the Zimbabwean dollar by cutting off the zeroes.



This note was in circulation before the Zimbabwean dollar itself was demonetized in early 2009 after inflation had reached 79.6 billion percent!

A point to note was that, despite hyper inflation, the Zimbabwean tax authorities (ZIMRA) would insist that Annual Income Tax Returns to be filed. (Tax authorities are one of a kind, anywhere in the world!) Change in the currency presented a nightmare and a huge challenge to corporate accountants in the preparation of a company's Balance Sheet. Any reserves in the old currency naturally got wiped off!

The US Dollar, the South African Rand and the Botswanian Pula became the official currencies after the Zimbabwean dollar was finally abandoned. In the backdrop of a flourishing illegal market in US Dollars during hyperinflation, the US Dollar became the most popular currency among the three. Shelves in shops and super markets slowly started filling up after a few years of shortages. This had a deep impact on the Zimbabweans who had witnessed an era of shortages and would therefore never waste anything - especially food.

By nature, Africans are very courteous, polite, sensitive and have a great sense of humour. It is not uncommon for Africans to make fun of themselves too. A popular joke during the hyperinflation times in Zimbabwe was; 'if you told a girl, she had a million dollar smile, you would probably get slapped'!

Life in Zimbabwe was full of surprises. After the initial shock of seeing Mambas, baboons and other creepy crawlies entering our house, we became adept in "being prepared" (Lord Baden Powell would have been proud of us!) Blessed with great weather, weekends in the country were usually spent outdoors with friends. A typical Sunday would entail a game of 'lawn bowls' (an old British game) or going for a full day 'pontoon' ride on the nearby "Sebakwe" river.



In true Zimbabwean style - food, beverages and fuel would again be brought in by those going for the ride! With the pontoon chuffing along, we would see hippos, crocodiles and many birds, as the river was also a bird lover's paradise. Hippos, incidentally cause more deaths than any other animal in Africa.



A favourite tradition adapted from the Afrikaans from South Africa is the 'braai' or barbecue. It is a great outdoor event where friends and family get together and chit chat over food and drinks. Food and drinks are pitched in by attendees and the whole atmosphere is one of bonhomie!

Doing business in Africa can be both challenging and frustrating. Power, water, internet, fuel (which we take for granted) could set you back for days. Candle light dinners are by default!

The key here is planning and getting quickly onto alternative Plans B, C,D,.....Stocking food, vegetables, and keeping your vehicle tanked up are some of the things you learnt quickly. Business happens at its own pace and any amount of 'pushing' would only get you frustrated and possibly raise your blood pressure! Perseverance and tremendous patience are much needed!



A prudent approach would be to 'let things happen at their own pace'. You have to remember that they are in no hurry, even if you are! Africans are great believers in following procedures - and in my experience, would not take any shortcuts in completing an assignment.

Most sub-Saharan African countries are rich in wildlife and it is tremendously gratifying to see Nature at its closest and best. The Hwange National Park and Mana Pools National Park are very popular in Zimbabwe apart from the "Victoria Falls". In most parks, you can drive your own vehicle if you do not opt for a guided tour. If a hungry lion were to find you, well, to say in true African style, BAD LUCK!!



Africa's simplicity is unparalleled. You have to love the people, the terrain and soak in the myriad traditions to enjoy your stay.

Going with the flow could never have been more appropriate, as in Africa!



HARVEST A BOUNTY FROM YOUR TERRACE

SOUMINI SRINIVAS

Enjoy the wholesome goodness of naturally grown veggies and fruits as part of your daily meal, says Soumini Srinivas (S-246)

In a world that is battling rising industrial pollution, farming practices too have become increasingly dependent on high levels of chemical inputs in the form of pesticides and fertilisers. But with growing awareness of the dangers of consuming foods cultivated with such toxic compounds, more and more people are moving towards organic foods and sustainable agricultural practices.

Organic farming in India is really nothing new and has been followed from ancient times. It is primarily aimed at cultivating the land and raising crops in a way that keeps the soil alive and in good health by the use of organic manures (crop, animal and farm wastes as well as aquatic wastes) and other biological materials, along with beneficial microbes (biofertilisers) and natural pest control agents. These sources release nutrients to crops, prevent crop loss and enhance sustainable production in an eco-friendly, pollution-free environment.


With the increase in population, our compulsion is not only to stabilise agricultural production but also to increase it sustainably. Scientists have realised that the high-input-use kind of practices that drove the 'Green Revolution' are no longer relevant and, indeed,

are seeing diminishing returns and falling dividends. Thus, a natural balance needs to be maintained for the sustenance of life and land.





In urban living conditions, gardening — even on a small scale — provides nutritious food for the body and also helps reduce the stress of daily life.


Home gardening has other benefits too. Some of these are:

 Kitchen wastes can be composted, thus reducing the load of garbage on community disposal.

 Bio-gas production from kitchen garbage is also possible.


 Increases green cover on terraces, and cuts costs of air-conditioning. Reduces ill-effects of pollution.


 Herbs and greens for daily use, such as lemongrass, mint, coriander, insulin plant, spinach and basil, can be easily grown.


 Economically viable soil alternatives, such as coco-peat, make it convenient to grow veggies and fruits in Growbags too.





Various precautions have to be taken before one starts organic gardening on one's terrace. Fortunately, I had planned my garden even while our home was under construction, so I faced fewer problems. You've got to make sure these key requirements are met:

 The terrace slab must be water-proofed.

 Adequate provision to be made for water supply and proper drainage, with slopes.

 Use of shade cover or green net, with posts provided to hold up the cover. I do not, however, use green net and have been quite successful thus far.

 Purchase of containers and Growbags, soil, cocopeat, vermicompost, organic seeds and materials to prevent pest infestation from reputed organic nurseries.

 Tools for spraying and gardening.

 Composting bins.

I have been growing 35 varieties of fruits and veggies and 35 types of flowering plants, 20 kinds of cactii and succulents and 10 herbs for the past four-five years on my terrace, using only organic methods.

Anyone interested in starting terrace gardening can contact me for free consultation between 9 am and 12 noon and is welcome to visit my garden in Besant Nagar. It would give me immense pleasure to share my experiences and knowledge, and the skills I have developed using trial and error methods, along with professional advice. Here a few pictures of my garden and the produce.



TO BE ALERT IS TO SAVE A LIFE

Kala Balasundaram



Having basic training in how to deal in a medical emergency can prove to be a life saver, says Kala Balasundaram (B186), Founder of ALERT

How many times have we walked past a scene of an accident feeling helpless? How many times have we been mere bystanders when a loved one in the family encountered an emergency not knowing what to do? How many times have we thought "Wish I had known how to handle such a situation then," while reliving the loss or even an injury of a dear friend?

If we were to take a macro look at the picture, we will realise that in India, we lose 17 lives every minute to emergencies. Over 95,000 people get killed in road traffic accidents annually. About 4,280 for every lakh of people succumb to sudden cardiac arrest. At least 80 per cent of deaths in hospitals take place in the first hour of admission. Doctors say that 75 per cent of them could have been saved, if emergency response was provided during the golden hour.

Is there anything I can do make a difference?

If that is what is running in your mind, please know that the answer is a clear "Yes, you can." ALERT, a non-profit organisation that aims to spread awareness about wellness, was born 10 years ago and works towards building a better emergency care eco system in our society. A first of its kind initiative in very many aspects, ALERT has undertaken Golden Hour Care and Emergency Response management as its core project. Through this project ALERT trains various sections of the society in emergency response and works towards building a medically aware and socially friendly society around us. This programme is being taken to corporates, educational institutions, shopkeepers, homemakers, fishermen, auto\cab drivers and other social bodies.

Driven by volunteerism, ALERT has trained over 45,000 people to date and steadily marches towards the goal set for it by our former President, late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam: "Train one in every family in emergency response". In a meeting with Dr. Kalam in 2008, he emphasised the need for taking this effort to the rural areas as well and since then, ALERT also focuses on rural outreach programmes.

Girija, a parent who got trained at ALERT, says, "I can confidently say that it was only due to my training that I was able to shed my initial inhibition and rise to the occasion. Else I would also have been a usual

passer-by expressing my two-minute concern over such events and moving on."

ALERT designed and implemented a curriculum on Golden Hour Care and Emergency Response management through an MoU with the Indian Medical Association. It has also been endorsed by the Department of Health, Government of Tamil Nadu. Its course has been approved by IIT Madras as an elective. ALERT also has an MoU with The Academy of Clinical Training to offer skill programmes in emergency response.

To further provide an opportunity for a common man to become skilled in emergency response, ALERT has launched a first of its kind simulation lab in India wherein emergency response is taught using high-end simulation equipment for effective learning. There are about 17 simulation labs in the country that are dedicated to technical training of medical practitioners. ALERT's simulation lab uses the methodology for the benefit of a lay person.

Dr. Mani Sivasubramanian, a cardiac surgeon, says, "Each trainee has a baseline score recorded — and it's amazing how dramatically this improves after some hands-on practice over the two-day workshop. If someone like me, who spent a large part of my adult life working with cardiac patients and performing more resuscitations than I care to remember, can benefit from this kind of training... then surely others will, too."

Will I get to practice what I get trained in?

ALERT provides an opportunity for those trained to volunteer in major public events such as the Wipro Chennai Marathon, My Flag My India by the Rotary, wherein they can practice being in readiness and put into practice, the lifesaving skills acquired.

Right as we see many changes happening for the good in many spheres in our country, significant steps have been taken towards bringing about policy changes to prevent harassment of those who help. With specific laws that will support a good Samaritan a few steps away, ALERT provides significant insights into these aspects as part of the sensitizing. It also works towards enabling the policy making happen.

With ALERT playing a significant facilitating role in bringing about the Good Samaritan law in our country, there should soon be no reason why anyone cannot help someone in a state of emergency. At the end of the day, it is all about the strong urge to help, backed by awareness and skill. We don't need another flood or a disaster to show our love and concern to our fellow brethren.



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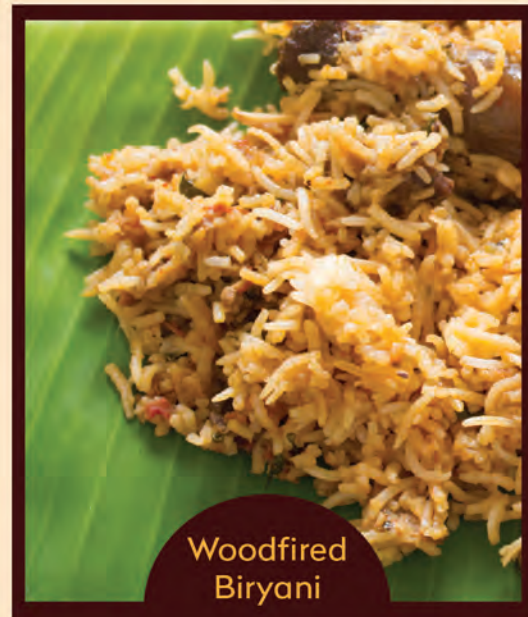
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MIND QUEST

Enigma

Questions: 

1. Which famous Indian's childhood nicknames were 'Manu and Moniya'?

2. In Harry Potter adventures, who succeeded Armando Dippet and in what post?



3. Which mammals belong to the Order Chiroptera?

4. Who was the last Indian before Kailash Satyarthi to win the Nobel Peace Prize?



5. Which European country's postage stamp would have the country's name as Helvetia?



6. If a philatelist collects stamps, what does a 'deltiologist' collect?

7. Which common Indian sweet's name comes from the Arabic for 'sweetmeat'?

8. In the Mahabharata, who commanded the Pandavas in the Kurukshetra war?

9. The world's largest lizard is found in Asia. Name it and the country to which it is endemic?

10. Which is the only city to have hosted the Summer Olympics three times?



11. By what common name is the vegetable Okra referred to in our country?

12. Indian history. Who led the British forces in the Battle of Buxar in 1764?

13. What is the third region of the atmosphere called?

14. Which world-famous literary character debuted in 'A Study in Scarlet'?

15. Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta is one of the most popular and successful composer-singers of the present day. What is her stage name?



1. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. 2. Albus Dumbledore as Principal of Hogwarts. 3. Bats. 4. St. Teresa of Calcutta (formerly Mother Teresa). 5. Switzerland. 6. Postcards. 7. Halwa. 8. Dhruvshikha. 9. Komodo Dragon and Indonesia. 10. London (1908, 1948 and 2012). 11. Ladies fingers. 12. Hector Munro. 13. Mesosphere. 14. Sherlock Holmes. 15. Lady Gaga.

VISUAL QUESTIONS

1. Name this popular Australian World Heritage Site revered by the native people.



2. Name this legendary film personality with whom many a child would identify?



3. Which country's flag is this and what is its Capital?



4. Identify this funny-looking animal.



5. This is a part of which famous automobile's logo?



1. Uluru or Ayers Rock. 2. Walt Disney.
3. Bhutan and Thimpu. 4. Lemur. 5. Porsche.

Visual Answers:

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CHILDREN'S DAY

@ GNC



A home to bank on

Babu Jacob (J126) looks back on how, driven by his dream, State Bank of India's first cooperative housing colony came up in Kochi

BABU JACOB

I joined State Bank of India as a Probationary Officer on April 17, 1967 — almost half a century ago. I got married four months later, after completing my first branch training in Tiruchirappalli branch and four weeks of training at SBI Staff Training Centre, Nagapattinam. After my third branch training, I was asked to report at SBI's Local Head Office (LHO) in Madras. After six weeks of LHO training, I was to be posted to a branch, where I was to be confirmed. SBI had, as its Circle Head, the Secretary and Treasurer (S&T), following the Imperial Bank system. Later, the Secretary and Treasurer became Chief General Manager, or CGM.

Though I was just at the beginning of my career, I dreamed of having a home I could call my own. I was fortunate to have been brought up in my grandmother's house in Kanjirappally, a small town in Central Kerala, till I was six or seven years old. It was a spacious, rambling house that stood on over a green acre, in the middle of Kanjirappally town, with a stream flowing in front, a small bridge across it. My middle-class parents, both of whom were working, could not afford to own a house. With five children to be brought up and educated, they had to live in a series of rented houses, perhaps more than half a dozen of them over the years.

A dream home

The PS (Private Secretary) to the S&T at the Madras LHO was, at that time, a direct recruit officer, Antony D'Costo, from Cochin. He took an instant liking to me. I told him about my dream of owning a house in Cochin, where my parents and siblings lived. SBI then had a policy of giving housing loans to officers and staff only through co-operative housing societies. Individual housing loans were not given at all. D'Costo, my senior by three batches, also wanted to take a loan to build a house in Cochin. He promised to use his influence to get me posted to the Cochin branch, and he succeeded. I was in seventh heaven. My dream of owning a house is soon going to be a reality!

Within a month of my posting to Cochin branch, still a probationary officer, I convinced a dozen officers in the Cochin area to form a co-operative housing society for officers in Kerala, a first in the State! But we needed more members to form a co-operative housing society, as per the rules of the State Government of the time. I started writing inland letters to all Malayalee officers in the four southern States that came under the Madras LHO. While some responded, many ignored my letters. In all, about 30 officers, (most of them promotee officers, with only three direct recruits like me) showed interest.

Some of them were sceptical about my capacity to carry out the mission because of my young age and lack of experience. Officers like KC Thomas, UGK Menon and V Krishnan, among others, were my pillars of strength and reposed full confidence in me. I am proud that I was able to live up to their expectations.

Prime real estate

A meeting of about 30 officers was held during the summer vacation so that officers working in branches in the four southern States could attend. I was unanimously elected the Chief Promoter of the proposed SBI Officers' Co-operative Housing Society Ernakulum and was authorised to go ahead and have it registered. We had the unstinted support of K. Ramakrishnan,

Agent, SBI Ernakulum (Agent became Branch Manager after reorganisation in 1972).

With the active co-operation of a few officers, our society was finally registered. I was the first Secretary and was authorised to go ahead and seek a housing loan from SBI and to scout around and finalise the purchase of land, fixing of an architect, contractor, and so on. I took leave for a month and started land-hunting. I saw several pieces of property during the weekends. Finally, with the help of a broker, I identified a rectangular, one-acre plot, a stone's throw away from Palarivattom Junction and the National Highway.

After getting the approval of all the members, we finalised the transparent deal at a price of Rs 1,050 per cent — totally for about Rs 1 lakh an acre! (The present market value of a cent of land in Palarivattom is Rs 30 lakhs per cent! This is about 3,000 times the price we paid in 1970!)

M/s NG George and Associates were appointed the architects. After some members dropped out, 16 members wanted to own houses on that plot. The architect prepared a plan for 16 independent, single-story houses of about 1100 sq ft, each in individual plots of five-six cents, with two internal roads connecting the houses. So, there were four rows of four houses, each set within its own compound walls.

Stamp duty exemption

Construction was completed in 18 months. The Bank gave each of us an interest-free loan of a princely sum of Rs 25,000! We had to struggle to garner the balance amount of about Rs 25,000 each. Some among us, including me, did not have the money even to pay the stamp duty to register the land! Mr KC Thomas, courtesy a bank's borrower by name Abraham Anthraper from Cherthala (popularly known as Avarachan), arranged for a meeting between me and the then Marxist Revenue Minister of Kerala, KR Gowri Amma, also from Cherthala, at the Government Secretariat in Trivandrum. Mr Abraham was kind enough to accompany me to the State Capital and was present during the meeting.

The minister gave a patient hearing to my request for exemption from paying stamp duty. I returned to Cochin and informed other members that the meeting went off well. The minister asked the officials concerned to issue a GO (Government Order), exempting all Co-operative Housing Societies from payment of stamp duty! Thanks to our initiative, all housing societies, existing and to be formed, got this benefit!

The inaugural function of the colony was a gala affair. It was on a sunny Sunday morning in 1972. A stage was erected and a pandal was in place. The Mayor of Cochin was roped in to preside over the grand function. The Mayor unveiled a marble plaque with my name as Secretary. Newspapers carried the story the next day. Most of the houses were occupied within a few months.

Even after 54 years, all the houses in the colony stand solid. Most owners have constructed first floors (the architect had had the foundation designed and built for two floors). Each house now costs approximately Rs 2 crores as against Rs 50,000 in 1972 — an appreciation of 400 times!

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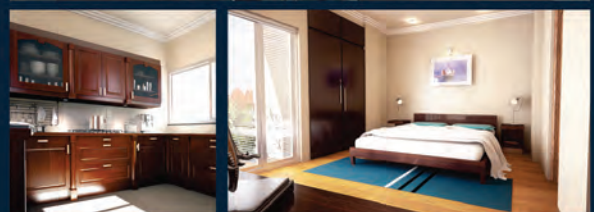
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SMART CITIES SECOND; PEOPLE FIRST

Zoyab A Kadi



What our cities need is not mere smartness but functionality and equity, says Zoyab Kadi (Z 101)

Let me begin with an analogy.

A vibrant, bustling urban agglomerate is much like a healthy, robust human being with all its various circulation systems in reasonably good working order. Stretching it a bit further: Just as it is not mandatory to use expensive gadgets and equipment to maintain good health — dietary discipline and a regimen of physical exercises generally being enough — so also, at city level, discipline through controls, rules and “community inclusion and participation” should be seen as the first step; followed only much later by well thought out construction of holistic infrastructure projects with a stamp of permanence and relevancy upon them. The great balancing question here is whether to be pro- or retro-active.

Currently all major Indian cities are appearing to be heading towards an irreversible crisis. Two areas, in particular, are a special cause for concern

- i) *The snail's pace at which traffic moves during peak hours and*
- ii) *the use, misuse and abuse of our public domain.*

THE TRAFFIC SCENARIO

Expensive flyovers, grade separators, road widening schemes, inner and outer ring roads take years to complete with huge cost overruns and with the inevitable result of falling short on performance. Teasingly, every time and no sooner blights are cleared, they appear to move a little farther away in an elusive catch-me- if-you- can game. This is not to decry their usefulness. But more often than not, they have become symbols of pandering to the rich and the powerful. A disconcerting fact that emerges from analysis of a typical traffic jam is that a large majority of the cars have only one or two occupants. Bigger cars and better roads have led to impatient maniacal tendencies, growing road rage, avoidable accidents and untimely

deaths.

A paradox for the common man is the relentless advertisements for a huge range of new cars/ two wheelers — tempting consumers with their cost-effective and luxury features — that are published every day. Where do all these vehicles go? How many more can the roads take?

The Government, through its Income Tax Department, is unwittingly, also a partner in this crime by offering a substantial incentive as allowable depreciation on purchase of any type of vehicle (amongst other things). All income tax payers are aware of this and why wouldn't they grab such a juicy offering?

FOR A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT:

- *All public authorities - RTOs, traffic, law enforcing police, surveillance must tighten their act; sensors and high resolution cameras must be connected to local monitoring centres, thereby reducing 'feet on the street'; Investments in inculcating road discipline must receive top priority.
- *There has to be a cap on the numbers of private vehicles that come on the road every year. Similarly old vehicles must be eased off the road.
- *There should be a 'rethink' on depreciation benefits for purchase of consumer items, notably vehicles, that leave a 'carbon footprint';
- *There must be a conscious effort to increase the number of passengers moved per vehicle. Feeder lines to mass rapid transit system hubs must be developed. Walking distances to pick up and drop off points should ideally be within 15 minutes from home or work place anywhere within the city.

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

For the purpose of this essay Public Domain has been defined as all that territory that extends beyond one's private property. Once beyond it, you are in the Public Domain.

In our current Indian culture, the misuse and abuse starts right from there. There are dozens of ways in which this happens, far too many to enumerate Here, but, nonetheless, familiar to all of us. A classification is attempted here to control, regulate or eliminate them; through curative, punitive or remunerative actions.

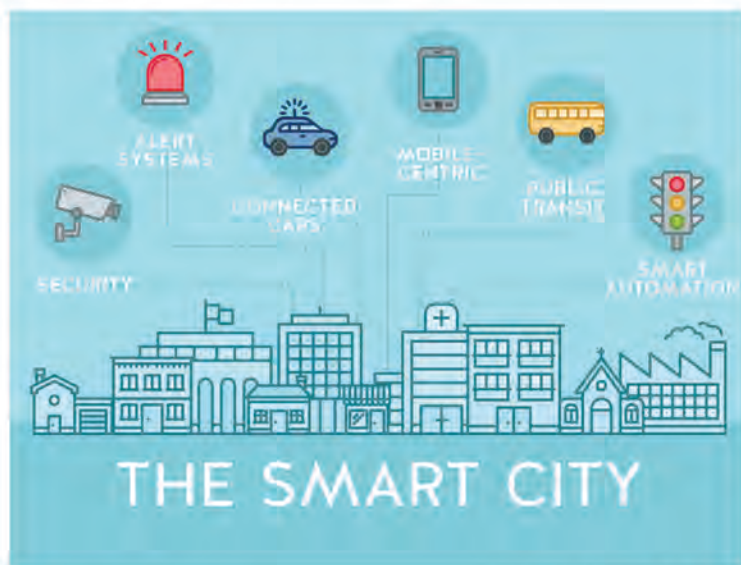
The conventional approach to solving urban issues is based on the widely held belief amongst planners that the issue must have an 'engineering' solution; a solution that is 'physical' and that must be 'seen' to have been implemented. This mindset either had lead to budgetary calculations that were often frustratingly beyond reach or to implementation of patchwork solutions, that within a short period of time became hopelessly inadequate. Recent trends in urban planning have put their faith in the manifesto of Smart Cities. There is a furtive hope that this may finally be the key to our Urban salvation.

The Government of India's reference note on Smart Cities identifies six characteristics: smart governance, smart mobility, smart economy, smart environment, smart living and smart people.

Smart cities depend for their smartness on data captured by sensors and cameras and analysed by algorithms to aid decision making in real time. This makes the Smart City dependent on private service providers, creating a huge market for them. The flip side of this are many — loss of privacy; the rise of a surveillance society; the possibilities of authoritarianism unleashed by biometric control; polarisation of the city into 'Smart' and 'Unsmart' areas that has the potential to lead to unanticipated social issues.

Whereas issues of traffic control and management are best left to experts, the same can't be said about the misuse/abuse of the Public Domain. Since the matter concerns the entire citizenry, some sort of categorisation is necessary for formulating an action plan. A campaign on a war-footing through various media and film documentaries, through schools and colleges, through banks and corporate companies, through effective advertisements and face value of famous personalities, through incentives and penalties, through awareness and propaganda - should be launched on the benefits of civic sense to everybody.

It is a long drawn campaign and all citizens must build up enough stamina to sustain the long road ahead. There is little doubt that the sum total of the money spent on this will still be much less than the cost of some small flyover. The categorisation and its follow up action, for any misuse/abuse is termed as protocol. The following four points are offered for deliberation.



Images Source: Internet



PROTOCOL 1: Misuse that creates unhygienic, hazardous living conditions (for example, random garbage disposal, littering, answering calls of nature, menace of stray and privately-owned cattle let loose). This requires both a curative and punitive approach and a suitable mechanism to enforce it.

PROTOCOL 2: Misuse for unregulated and unauthorised parking of all types of vehicles (Private cars, autos and mini Lorries) and eventually claiming it as a right; and for storage and dumping of bulky kind of building materials and debris. Punitive as well as profitable measures need to be adopted that can generate revenue and deter people from taking public space for granted. A corruption-free system should be devised to collect Parking / storage fee by the hour/day/week.

PROTOCOL 3: Misuse by informal commercial sectors (Food vendors, hawkers, ironing men, roadside mechanics) that operate beyond any statutory network, that take advantage of prime public spaces and over a period of time consolidate their position. Here again a local Council can generate funds and bring order into the sector with some tax networking and licensing systems. This can also be used to advantage to enhance the image of the City, by providing smartly-designed mobile kiosks.

PROTOCOL 4: Unsolicited posters, hoardings, banners, cut-outs, TV cables and advertisements indiscriminately plastered all over the city, whose messages nobody even cares to read. The severest punitive action should be reserved for offenders in this category. It shouldn't be difficult to catch them. They leave enough clues all over.

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

A Declaration of a People's Charter must be drafted in which the Objectives, Rights and Duties of all citizens with regard to usage of the Public Domain should be spelt out.

The new organisation must attempt to add a new layer of opportunity, sans bureaucracy, by inviting individuals, corporates, colleges and universities to sign the Charter and become members.

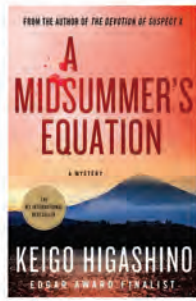
Electoral wards are our smallest and most local areas; Ward Councillors are our most grassroots and accessible political representatives. The principle of the Charter should be to gain their support, thereby giving it a legitimacy.

Suitable aids for decision-making — sign boards, sensors, high resolution cameras and other deterrent measures — must be put in place at vantage points.

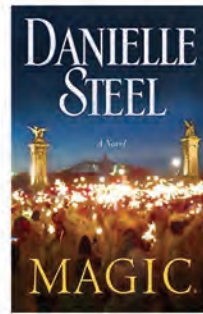
Ironically, the People's Charter must rely on technology to dole out justice fairly and uniformly to all its Citizens — without fear or favour.



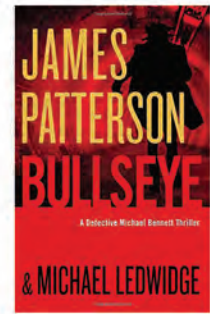
Daniel Silva
The Black Widow



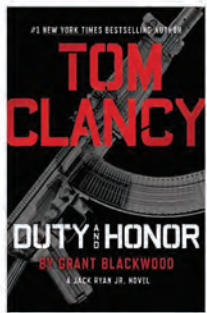
Keigo Higashino
A Midsummers
Equation



Danielle
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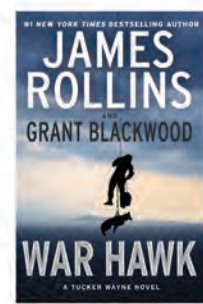
Jam
Bullseye



Tom Clancy
Duty and Honour



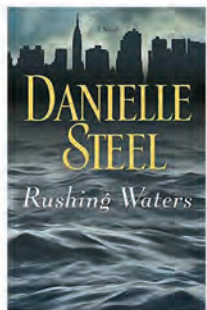
Cathy Maxwell
The Fairest of them all



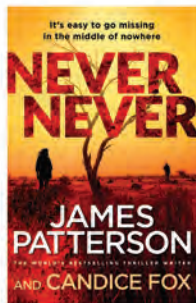
Jam
War Hawk



Ar
Selection Day



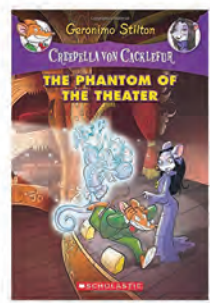
Rushing Waters



Jam
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